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ABSTRACT

The involvement of undergraduate minority students in five campus minority student organizations was studied at a major midwestern university. The roles these groups play as perceived by minority students and the extent to which minority students are involved in general campus student groups was assessed. The study sample consisted of 74 Afro-Americans, 86 Asian Americans, 121 Hispanics (Chicano and Puerto Rican), and 40 Native American Indian undergraduates registered at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and residing in Wisconsin. Attention was directed to: respondents' knowledge of five ethnic minority student organizations; whether respondents who were not actively involved in any of the organizations attended programs of the groups; reasons for noninvolvement; and student perceptions of the role of minority student groups, the university, and their pre-college membership activities. Demographic information was also collected. Despite modest involvement of minority students in the organizations, for the most part students had positive feelings about involvement. Students from each of the four groups identified "promoting cultural awareness" as a primary function for all minority student groups. Implications of the findings are considered, and suggestions for further research are offered. (SW)

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Minority Student Involvement in Minority Student Organizations: An Exploratory Study

FINAL REPORT

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ABSTRACT

An exploratory study undertaken to provide descriptive data regarding undergraduate minority student involvement in five campus minority student organizations at a major midwestern university. The roles these groups play as perceived by minority students and the extent to which minority students are involved in general campus student groups are explored.

MINORITY STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN MINORITY STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS:

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

Student organizations are the non-academic counterpart to the classroom. These organizations help prepare students for the practical realities of civic, political and social life that most will encounter once they graduate from college. They provide an arena for students to practice leadership, citizenship, engage freely in the discussion of issues and concerns, and learn organizational skills (Minahan, 1957).

Although the connection between involvement in extra-curricular activities and retention in college has not been conclusively established, it is plausible that such involvement and integration into college life may contribute to a student remaining at a particular institution (Pantages & Creedon, 1978).

For minority students on a majority campus, the ability to achieve academic and social adjustment is often difficult (Lyon 1973; Garza & Nelson 1973; Hunt 1975). Until recently the opportunity to participate in general student organizations and campus life was often not available to minority students. Such exclusion may have exacerbated feelings of isolation which in turn adversely affected student well-being and retention.

Within the last two decades, minority student organizations have emerged to provide minority students an opportunity to be involved in campus life. Many exist at least in part to assist students with cultural identification and to provide peer support. Minority student groups often assume sole responsibility for a variety of co-curricular activities such as heritage weeks, special programs and newsletters. In addition to the inherent value to the participants, these activities keep majority institutions aware of a minority presence. The availability of these activities may well determine the success or influence on the recruitment and retention of other minority students at majority institutions.

The findings of Carr and Chittum (1979) cite the relevance of minority student organizations for retaining minority students. This research also indicates that students of all racial or ethnic backgrounds feel isolated and alienated when their respective student organizations don't exist and when there is little being done to encourage their participation in campus life.

A study done by Jones (1975) also supports this claim. This research, however, suggests that feelings of alienation and lack of involvement are not as evident among affluent minority students. Conversely, their less affluent counterparts might well feel the stress of competing academically. They are also less likely to be trustful of non-minorities or involved in campus life.

Minority student organizations exist at almost every college or university where there is a sizable enrollment of minority students. In some instances these groups exist as an alternative to involvement in the predominate non-minority groups such as student government associations, union activities and special interest or political groups. While there is

some information regarding the function minority groups serve for minority students, their reasons for not joining majority groups may be based on different interest or goals or on perceptions that even though the groups are "open", they are not necessarily receptive.

While the need for minority student organizations is articulated in the research, it is not clear to what extent minority students themselves are in fact involved or feel the need for these groups. The extent to which minority students have mastered the transition to becoming involved in student organization activities in general is also unclear. According to Eloy Chavez (1982) minority students today are different from those during the years of Woodstock, Vietnam and Sunset Strip. Having settled the struggle of identity, current minority students have more drive to participate in extracurricular activities beyond those in which minority student organizations sponsor.

At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where this study was undertaken, the 1982 fall enrollment for ethnic minority undergraduate, graduate and special students totaled 2,074. The total overall enrollment was approximately 40,000 students. Of the 2,074, there were 122 Native Americans (6%), 887 Afro-Americans or Blacks (43%), 469 Hispanic (Chicano or Puerto Ricans) (22%), and 596 Asian Americans (29%).

Approximately 400 student organizations including union boards and councils and volunteer, political and Greek groups exist within the University community. Included in this total are five ethnic minority student organizations which represent students of each minority group respectively. The group is distinguished as representative of Afro-American, Asian American, Chicano, Native American Indian and Puerto Rican students. Among the goals of these five groups is the promotion of cultural and political awareness, the growth of group identity, and the support of retention and recruitment of other minority students.

The elected representatives of the five ethnic minority groups comprise a student advisory group known as the Multi-Cultural Council. The Council serves as a funding and coordinating body, responsible in part for multi-cultural programming through the allocation of funds for educational and cultural events. The five groups were selected for the study because they serve as the umbrella organizations which represent ethnic minority students on campus.

In addition to the aforementioned groups, there are eight minority greek organizations with a majority representation of black students. There are also pre-professional minority student organizations associated with the various schools and colleges. Total membership for any of these organizations is unknown.

At Madison, there is general support of the notion that there is a positive relationship between the existence of minority student organizations and the retention of minority students. Although little data is available that will support or refute this claim, clearly these organizations play a role in campus life for some minority students and perhaps for the student community as a whole.

This research was undertaken in an effort to provide some descriptive data regarding minority student involvement in the five ethnic minority student organizations; their role as perceived by minority students; minority student involvement in campus student groups in general; and the factors related to minority student groups that may support retention. The major research questions are:

1) To what extent are minority students aware of the five ethnic minority student organizations?

2) To what extent are minority students involved in the five groups?

3) What are the expectations minority students have of these five groups?

4) What are their perceptions of these groups?

5) Are minority students involved in non-minority (general) student organizations?

6) To what extent do minority students feel represented by other large umbrella student organizations?

7) Is there a difference in the needs of minority students with respect to student organizations?

8) To what extent do minority students perceive an opportunity for involvement in other student organizations?

METHODOLOGY

Sample Population

In this study, the population of interest was defined as all Afro-American, Asian American, Hispanic (Chicano and Puerto Rican) and Native American Indian undergraduate students registered at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and residing in the State of Wisconsin. Undergraduate minority students totaled 1,265 during the 1982 fall semester. This total represented 61% of the University's minority student population and 4.4% of the total undergraduate student population.

From the pool of 1,265 minority undergraduates, a stratified random sample of 400 students was drawn. To select this sample, a systematic name sample was selected from the Registrar's records using the permanent student numbers assigned by the Registrar. The systematic sample was selected as follows:

Sixty-two random two-digit numbers were selected from a table of random numbers.[1] All Hispanic students for whom the third and second from the last digits of the student number corresponded to the two-digit random numbers were selected as part of the sample.

[1] Rand Corporation. One million random numbers and 100,000 normal deviates.

The sampling procedure described in the previous paragraph yielded 172 names and addresses. Three sample names fell outside the local call area and three were randomly eliminated leaving a final sample of 166.

From the random numbers selected for Hispanic students, 38 were randomly selected for the sample of Asian American students. This yielded 151 names and addresses. Thirty-nine were randomly eliminated leaving a final sample of 112.

From the random numbers selected for Hispanic students, 26 were randomly selected for the sample of Afro-American students. This yielded 155 names and addresses. Three sample names fell outside the local call area and 40 were randomly eliminated leaving a final sample of 112.

All Native American students were eligible for this survey. Sixty-eight names and addresses fell into the sample. Five of these were located outside the local call area leaving a final sample of 63.

The systematic samples from the three populations can be safely treated as random samples for analytic purposes. Afro-American, Hispanic and Asian American groups received weights inverse of the sampling rate in order to be combined.

Afro-American students were sampled at a rate of every 5.18; Asian American, 3.55; and Hispanic, 1.64. All Native American Indian undergraduate students were included in the sample. The Hispanic group was over sampled in order to ensure a representative number of Puerto Rican and Chicano students as this distinction is not made in the data base.

The sampled students were telephoned and, after eligibility was confirmed, were interviewed. In checking for eligibility it was found that twelve Afro-American students, eight Asian American students, 22 Hispanic students and six Native American students were found to be ineligible. All of these turned out to be Law or Medical students who had erroneously been included.

A total of 321 interviews were completed for a response rate of 80%. Table 1 shows the response results for the eligible respondents in the four populations. The final sample involved 74 Afro-American, 86 Asian American, 121 Hispanic, and 40 Native American Indian undergraduate students.

TABLE 1

Distribution of Response Results

Population	Eligible	Completed	Refused	Other Non-Response	Couldn't Locate	Response Rate w/ Couldn't Locate as Nonresponse	Response Rate w/ Couldn't Locate as Ineligible
Afro-American	100	74	3	7	16	74	88
Asian American	104	86	2	7	9	83	91
Hispanic	144	121	-	17	6	84	88
Native American	57	40	2	6	9	70	83

Survey Questionnaire Design

The survey questionnaire consisted of 26 questions. The interview schedule categorized the questions into four distinct series. The first series assumed respondent knowledge of the five ethnic minority student organizations and therefore attempted to identify the extent of involvement. The second series was aimed toward those students who were not actively involved in one of the minority organizations, but explored whether they had in fact attended programs or activities sponsored by these groups. A third series of questions sought to identify minority student involvement in campus student organizations in general and the reasons, if any, for their lack of involvement and whether they felt that the opportunity for involvement existed. The fourth and final series of questions asked respondents to identify the extent they felt represented in general, their perceptions of the role of minority student groups, their perception of UW-Madison, and their own pre-college membership activities and demographic information.

The interview schedule underwent slight revisions and changes as a result of the pre-test. A draft of the questionnaire was also reviewed by key staff and graduate students and their suggestions for clarification and information were used. From the pre-test a final questionnaire was developed.

Data Collection

The data for the project was collected during the 1982 fall semester after six-week exams and prior to the twelve-week examination period. Prior to the pre-test, meetings were held with the student leaders of minority organizations to discuss the project. Follow-up visits were made to one of each of the minority student organization's meetings. A project letter outlining the goals and intent of the study was sent to the student leaders of all minority student groups known to exist on the UW-Madison campus. This letter was followed-up by a letter to the individuals who were actually included in the sample. On the whole, the study received the enthusiastic support of minority student organization leaders and members.

The actual interviews were conducted by trained staff from the Wisconsin Survey Research Laboratory. The interview lasted 10-15 minutes depending on the respondent.

Limitations of the Study

As a result of continuing changes in student interests and organizations, it is difficult to draw broad conclusions beyond the current sample.

Another limitation is the way in which minority student status is identified. At Madison, minority status is self reported on the course registration form. Using this data base for the study pose some obvious sampling problems. While not totally reliable, it is the most comprehensive data base available.

Generalizations are also limited as a result of the weighted sample and are somewhat further complicated by the sample size of respondents results from each group. The exception of course is the Native American Indian population where all eligible undergraduates were included.

Characteristics of the Sample Group

Demographic analysis revealed a sample of 56% male, 44% female. Seventy-eight percent lived off-campus and 22 percent lived in University Housing. These housing patterns are similar to those of non-minority students. Nearly all students (96%) had decided on a major. School/college enrollment was highest in the College of Letters and Science, followed by the College of Engineering and the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. Academic year findings were 20 percent freshman, 28 percent sophomore, 22 percent junior and 30 percent senior. Before coming to UW-Madison, 82 percent were active in a high school, church or community group. Approximately half reported being very active, 18% reported being active and 14% reported being somewhat active. Sixty-three percent considered their high schools integrated and 65% were Wisconsin residents. The mean educational background for parents (or parent figures) was the completion of high school. About 30% had completed college.

Findings

Involvement of Ethnic Minority Student in Five Minority Student Organizations

The involvement of minority students in the five ethnic minority student organizations is relatively modest. Less than one out of every five students (17%) reported being active in one of the five groups. A total of 70%, however, reported being aware of the existence of the five groups.

Table 2 represents a comparative breakdown by minority groups regarding awareness and involvement.

TABLE 2

Patterns of Involvement/Awareness of Five Minority Student Organizations

	Afro-American	Asian American	Hispanic American	N. Am. Indian	All Minorities
Percent of Awareness	64%	76%	70%[1]	63%	70%
Percent of Activeness	10%	8%	17%[1] 6%[2]	30%	13%
Number of Sample Cases	74	86	121	40	927[3]

[1] Puerto Rican students

[2] Chicano students

[3] Weighted sample with numbers adjusted to equal probabilities

NOTE: The ethnic minority data base prevents an analysis of the distribution regarding the organization's awareness between hispanic groups. Within the sample 39 students identified themselves as Chicano and 39 as Puerto Ricans. Another 27 were identified as Hispanic; the remaining 16 as other or mixed race.

Overall, as shown in Table 2, more minority students are aware of the existence of their respective groups than are active in the groups. Native American Indian and Puerto Rican students show the highest level of involvement. Native American Indians out ranked all groups when comparing awareness to involvement.

Of those students who reported an awareness of their respective organizations, 53% became aware as a result of receiving an organizational newsletter. Approximately 14% heard about an organization from a friend. The remaining 22% became aware of an organization as a result of a faculty, staff, roommate or relative. Fourteen percent of those students who indicated an awareness, also indicated that they had a friend who was an active member of one of the five groups.

The stewardship and maintenance of the five minority student groups is confined to a fairly small percentage among undergraduate minority students Of the active students in this group, the majority had participated for at least two years and described their involvement as holding office, committee work, special projects and simply attending meetings. Twelve percent indicated that their involvement had aided their feelings of comfort at the UW-Madison.

Planning and scheduling special programs which highlight minority heritage weeks, issues and cultural diversity represent a significant portion of the activities carried out by the five student groups. These programs represent a significant portion of cultural oriented activities on campus. The study examined the extent in which minority students in fact attend these functions. The interview question limited the response to the preceeding year. First year students would obviously be unable to respond to the question. The results showed that a third of the students had attended a program sponsored by their respective minority groups. Less than 1% reported attendance at programs sponsored by one of the other minority student groups.

Despite what appears to be modest involvement in the five minority student groups, most minority students (62%) have a positive attitude with respect to the existence of these groups. Table 3 is a summary of the responses within each group.

TABLE 3

Minority Student Feelings About Being Involved in an All Minority Student Organization*

Feelings About Minority Student Groups	Afro-American	Asian American	Hispanic American	N. Am. Indian	All Minorities
Positive	70%	54%	61%	55%	62%
Negative	18	23	31	28	23
Don't Know	12	23	8	18	14
Refused	--	--	--	--	1
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of Cases	74	86	121	40	927**

*Table indicated in percentages.
**Weighted sample with numbers adjusted to equal probabilities.

Clearly a majority of minority students feel positive about being involved in an all minority student group. There are slight variations between and within the groups. For example, Afro-American students are much more positive than any one of the other three groups. Hispanics show a slightly higher percentage on the negative side.

The most pronounced variation appears when the responses in Tables 2 and 3 are compared. Specifically, in Table 2, an impressive number of minority students feel positive about being involved in an all minority student group. Yet the overall percentage of active students is quite small. Assuming that on some level awareness would lead to active involvement, as would positive feelings, this particular data suggests that there is little if any relationship between the three variables. Conclusions are limited because the study did not address the issue of minority student needs for such groups or whether their levels of awareness had an impact on active involvement. One effort to obtain limited information regarding a level of awareness was the question regarding attendance at programs. Of course interest is a significant variable. Since a great deal of the five organization time is spent planning programs, the assumption here was that attendance would be significantly higher than the data reports.

Respondents were given the opportunity to explain their answer regarding their feelings about involvement in an all minority student group. They were able to cite as many choices as desired. Responses were categorized into positive and negative and tabulated by the frequency of the response in like groupings for each category.

There were eleven different responses cited under the positive category. They were:

-- Can interrelate, familiar background and culture
-- Chance to socialize and make friends
-- Feel comfortable and secure
-- Support, provide help, problem solving
-- Provide leadership, recognition, status
-- Impact on system
-- Provide minority programs
-- Learning experience/educational
-- Other
-- Don't know/no reason

The negative responses totaling eight were:

-- Isolating, segregating, cliquey
-- Don't like the idea of joining groups
-- Don't think of myself as a minority
-- Don't have time, not important
-- Negative influence, identification
-- Lack of information/focus, ineffective
-- Other
-- Don't know/no reason

The most important reason for being involved in an all minority student group for all four groups was being able to interrelate with those of a familiar background and culture. Conversely the reason cited most often for not belonging to such a group was that such groups tend to alienate, segregate, and are cliquey. Hispanics cited this reason more than any of the other three groups. The chance to "socialize, make and be with friends" was the second reason supported by all four groups. The third choice of African American, Asian American and Hispanic students was support, help and problem solving. For Native American students the third choice was to feel unity, solidarity and community. Very few respondents cited any of the remaining factors. No students from any of the groups cited providing minority programs as a factor for being involved in an all minority student group.

With respect to the negative responses, Asian Americans tended to dislike the idea of an all minority student group, the primary reason being that they did not view themselves as being a minority. While less than the Asian American group, a sizable number of Hispanic and Native American students gave the same response. In comparison only one Afro-American felt this way. Asian Americans also report more frequently that they didn't have time for groups and that they were not important. Very few respondents saw the group as having a negative influence or lacking focus.

The fact that no student reported liking the idea of being in an all minority student group as a way of providing minority programs, may be related to awareness and involvement. As aforementioned, planning programs represents a large portion of the activities undertaken by the five minority groups. If a student is not involved, there is no reason to believe the expectation exist for such activities beyond the core group that is involved. The data, however may simply mean that respondents place no importance on such activities which may impact on active involvement.

Given that minority student groups sponsor much of the minority program activities on campus, this data also questions the level of awareness. It seems that while a high percentage of students are aware of their respective groups, perhaps they did not have sufficient knowledge of what the groups really do.

The preceeding discussion does not totally answer the question of why more minority students are not involved in minority student organizations. A later question asked students to identify their reasons for inactivity in all student organizations. The responses can be assumed in part to apply to minority student organizations as well.

Whether respondents gave a positive or negative response regarding the idea of an all minority student group, they were asked to indicate their preference of the function of an all minority student group. Five identified functions were read to the respondents by the interviewer. The functions are:

-- Promote cultural awareness
-- Promote political awareness
-- Provide group support
-- Provide social activities
-- Maintain group identity

Respondents could choose as many of the five functions as they desired. Responses were ranked in the order that they were mentioned.

In order of preference, promoting cultural awareness was the overall first choice for each of the four groups. It received however, a slightly lower rating from Afro-American students. Promoting political awareness, which was the overall second preference, was most important to Hispanics and least to Asian Americans. Providing social activities was the clear third choice among all groups, however, fewer than half of the Asian Americans felt this function important. Providing group support was ranked fourth, but was more important to the Afro-American, Hispanic and Native American groups. The last and final function, maintaining group identity, received an overall low ranking from each of the groups though it was most important to Native American students.

Clearly all five functions are important; however, there is a concensus among the sample group that the primary function of an all minority student organization is to promote cultural awareness. This data suggests minority students expect that all minority students to "interrelate with those from their own background and culture". In comparing the data regarding the function of an all minority student group to the positive feelings students had about such groups, the data implies that there is an expectation that the groups are more social in nature, provide social activities, support cultural activities where minority students can feel comfortable. This explains why no student listed "providing minority programs" as a reason for being involved in an all minority student group.

In summary, few minority students report active involvement in one of the minority student organizations, however, a significant percentage are aware of the existence of the groups. Students also had some idea regarding the functions of all minority student groups and more than half reported that they like the idea of being involved in an all minority student group.

Minority Student Involvement in General Student Organizations

Students were asked to indicate membership in as many organizations as were applicable in nine broad categories of other campus student groups. No distinction was made as to whether the groups were predominately minority or majority representation. Two percent indicated no involvement with any group. Of this group, 40% had never been involved in any student organization, however, 44% felt that they could be involved if they chose to do so. The predominate reasons for not being involved were "school work", too "time consuming" and "little value to education". For vocational or professional groups, 17% reported being active members, 8% were members but not active. Twelve percent are active members of a sorority or fraternity and 8% are members but not active. It is assumed that the Greek organizations are the predominately black groups. Other groups showing significant involvement by minority students were volunteer, recreational and social groups. Some students (12%) also indicated active involvement in other groups. Involvement in campus student organizations, as such, does indeed appear to be a priority among minority students.

Closer examination was made of the responses with respect to active involvement with Residence Halls Associations, the Wisconsin Student Association which is the student government body and the Wisconsin Union Directorate which is the student and staff programming committee for the Wisconsin Union all of which are large umbrella student organizations. Essentially all students who reside in Residence Halls are automatically members of the various house associations. Membership in the Wisconsin Union Directorate is elective.

For Residence Hall Association, 6% reported being active and 3% reported being members but not active. Seventy-eight percent of minority students reside in off-campus housing which certainly accounts for the low involvement in Residence Hall Associations. Minority students reporting membership and involvement in the Wisconsin Student Association totaled 12% and the Wisconsin Union Directorate 15%. Since the Wisconsin Student Association (WSA) is the all student government body, students were asked to indicate their level of familiarity with this group and the degree to which they felt WSA was responsive to the needs of minority students. While involvement was reportedly low, most students 54% were familiar with WSA. Those familiar were asked whether WSA was responsive to the needs and interest of minority students. The responses were almost even, in that 17% said WSA was responsive and 18% said no. The remaining 63% didn't know or had no opinion.

The reasons cited by the "yes" group as evidence of WSA's responsiveness included: "the provision of funds for minority programs", and "an increase of co-sponsored minority events and minority representation". These activities were not viewed as being sufficient. This group also found WSA to be generally supportive when approached for a specific need. Conversely, the absence of minority entertainment sponsored by WSA was cited as evidence of non-responsiveness. Also, some students felt that WSA is in general not responsive to the majority of all students and tends to represent the interest of the elected representatives.

Sixty-three percent of those students reporting familiarity with WSA had no opinion or did not know whether WSA was responsive to the needs of minority students. While the percentage of awareness for minority student organizations among minority students is higher (70%) than that of WSA (54%), it is somewhat lower than expected since the minority student groups are intended primarily for the membership and representation of minority students. Given these findings, it would seem that greater interaction may be warranted between the five ethnic minority student groups and WSA with the minority student population.

The data does not directly answer the question regarding the degree to which minority students feel represented in general student organizations. In view of the findings regarding the involvement of minority students in general student organizations, however, it would appear that minority students perceive an opportunity for involvement and are involved in non-minority student groups. In addition, their involvement in professional or vocational groups indicates that a certain portion place value on those activities that are related to career goals or aspirations. Also with a limited amount of time for extracurricular activities, minority students, like all students, may be choosing how to spend their time and in which groups.

Perceptions of the University Environment

The group's perception of the University, areas of responsiveness and feeling about the environment was somewhat surprising. When asked what offices or departments were responsive to the needs of minority students, almost every student service area was mentioned at least once. Minority program offices were cited frequently, but so were those offices who are often viewed as serving the general student population.

This data does not imply a disappointment with minority programs, but rather that other areas are viewed as being helpful as well. Additionally, there is evidence that minority students perceive broad options in their ability to seek and receive assistance. Respondents were then asked if they would or had gone to any of the aforementioned offices for assistance. Fewer than half (48%) reported that they had or would go. Nevertheless, it is significant that students have knowledge of a range of services on campus of which they believe to be responsive to their needs and were able to name those services.

Further analysis of the service patterns of the ethnic groups and academic classification is indicated here. Other areas that might be examined are: 1) do minority freshmen tend to seek assistance from a minority program office and is there a gradual decrease by upper class students who might be more knowledgeable about other service areas, 2) do particular minority groups have a usage pattern, 3) does environmental optimism often observed in freshmen cause them to exercise their options, 4) are there differential patterns between male and female minority students, and 5) what are the considerations that influence the selection of offices in seeking assistance.

A great majority of the students (91%) felt very good or good about being at the University. Unfortunately the instrument did not allow respondents to cite contributing factors. A summary of those responses by group is reflected in Table 4.

TABLE 4

Feeling Toward the University By Student Minority Group

Feeling Toward the University	Afro-American	Asian American	Hispanic	N. Am. Indian	All Minorities
Very good	46%	67%	69%	65%	59%
Good	37	39	26	33	32
Not good	15	--	4	3	7
Don't know	3	1	1	--	2
Refused	--	2	--	--	.8
TOTAL PERCENTILE	101%	99%	100%	101%	100%
Number of Cases	74	86	121	40	927*

*Weighted sample with numbers adjusted to equal probability

The responses of Afro-American students are more evenly distributed than any of the other three groups, and a higher percentage of this group did not feel good about being at the University.

Despite the overall positive findings related to the general feelings toward their environment, more than half of the minority students identified areas where the University could be more responsive. Those areas identified were ranked in the order mentioned most frequently and summarized into five separate categories. Hispanics and Afro-Americans identified areas of responsiveness more than did Asian Americans and Native American Indians.

Of the students responding 16% identified academic and guidance counseling. Social programs were identified by 10% and cultural programs by 8%. Promoting an awareness of ethnic minority groups was identified by 8%. The recruitment and retention of minority staff and financial aid were identified respectively at 6%. An orientation to the University and its organization and operations was cited by 5%. Few students (2%) identified career advising per se, however, it seems that this function is implied in academic guidance and counseling.

The primary emphasis here is on non-monetary assistance. This is not surprising because general financial assistance is an issue resolved during the beginning of the year. Once resolved students have an opportunity to focus on other unresolved needs. The identification of academic guidance and orientation is consistent with findings from studies which relate to non-minority students. The remaining issues are also consistent to findings from previous studies which relate specifically to minority students.

Discussion

For a number of years research has focused on the needs of minority students (primarily Afro-American students until recently) on majority campuses that would enhance their environment and have a positive effect on retention. In some studies, the existence of minority student organizations and their related activities were identified as relevant factors. This study was an attempt to examine the role five umbrella minority student groups representing Afro-American, Asian American, Chicano, Puerto Rican and Native American Indian students play at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the extent to which minority students are involved with these five groups and other campus student organizations.

The findings revealed a relatively modest number of minority students who were active with the five minority organizations. Because so little is known about the actual membership of the 400 or so student organizations at the University, this phenomenon may not be inconsistent with other student groups. Despite low involvement, minority students have for the most part positive feelings about being involved in an all minority student group. Students from each of the four groups identified "promoting cultural awareness" as a primary function for an all minority student group. There are, however, variations between groups for the remaining functions which suggest that each group has different needs and issues.

Lack of involvement may not be an indication that minority students are disappointed or do not feel represented by their respective groups. For example, the number of Chicano students involved in the Chicano student organization was quite small. This group, however, is quite active politically on campus and in the community. The function of promoting political awareness for a minority student group was rated as a high choice for this core group of students. Also there may be a comfort factor in simply knowing that the groups exist.

Each of the groups undertake the planning and developing of cultural programs. The fact that students did not identify "providing cultural programs" as a function suggests that they do not expect their peers to assume this responsibility. Conversely, students did identify "providing cultural programs" as an area where the University could be more responsive. This poses an interesting dilemma. The University, like other large majority institutions, attempts to provide cultural activities for minority students by providing financial support to the Multi-Cultural Council. The Council, a student group, in turn reviews requests from minority student groups and allocates funds in support of cultural programs planned and developed by that group. By doing so, the University indirectly provides cultural programs to promote an awareness of ethnic groups. There is, however, a long standing expectation from minority students that majority institutions make persistent efforts toward enhancing a cultural environment for minority students. In response to their concerns for recruitment and retention of minority students, universities have assumed this responsibility. In doing so, they have encouraged the expectation that such activities fall within its domain. Within this framework, it is not surprising that students would identify "providing cultural programs" as a role for the University rather than one for a student group. On the other hand, minority students may simply be saying that such activities should not be the sole responsibility of a minority student group. Even

with the activities developed by the student groups, a gap remains in the incidence and frequency of such activities. Moreover, minority students do not seem to link the expectation that the five minority student groups "promote cultural awareness" to the activity of providing cultural programs. Can it then be assumed that cultural awareness is more informal and occurs when there are enough minority students to form a critical mass?

Most studies conducted at majority campuses related to minority students discuss the voids in opportunities for this group. Madison, however, has a number of minority student groups in addition to the five involved in this study. It remains a puzzle that more minority students are not involved in an all minority student group. Lack of involvement is, however, not an indication that minority students do not feel represented or are dissatisfied by their respective groups. Also there may be a comfort factor in simply knowing that the groups exist. Does this lack of involvement somewhat verify Chavez's (1982) assertion that today's minority students are different and more inclined to be involved in organizations other than those designed for minority students?

While minority students are not involved in large numbers with the larger non-minority student groups such as the student association or union programming boards, a significant number are involved in other general student groups. The association with professional/vocational groups may indicate that a portion of the sample group is similar to their majority counterparts and select group membership with an eye towards career goals.

The findings also suggest that minority students are involved in campus life in general. Given the large number who live off campus (78%), it is surprising to find such a high degree of involvement. This finding however is a direct contradiction of a recent Newsweek report (1983) which maintains that minority students choose to isolate themselves on majority campuses and are not involved outside of their own groups.

Eloy Chavez (1982) supports the movement by minority students to general student organizations. He asserts that minority student organizations are limited in their ability to promote the genuine integration of minority students into campus life on a majority campus. Further, the focus of these groups on the traditional activities of heritage week and special programs is not sufficient and limits interaction with the broader community.

Like Minahan (1957), Chavez believes the campus student organizations, boards or councils serve as the primary source for the development of leadership and organizational skills. While Chavez's assertions about minority organizations may be valid, they are based on several assumptions: that minority student groups are void of such opportunities; that involvement in other student groups is indeed open and perceived to be so; that minority student groups do not serve the broader campus; and that there is a decreased need for the kind of activities minority student groups provide.

The low attendance pattern of minority students at the cultural programs offered by the five minority student groups is somewhat of a surprise. This is particularly so since a high percentage report an awareness of their respective groups. Also, because minority students have identified a need for such activities. Several factors may be involved such as the nature of the programs as well as off-campus residency. Students may be less inclined to return to campus for programs generally held in the evening. The positive reasons given for being involved in an all minority student group outweighs the negative, yet active involvement and program attendance is low. Perhaps the five groups should examine their roles and activities in the interest of increasing involvement and representation.

Minority organization programs and activities are often planned with an emphasis on educating or informing the non-minority population about the cultural, political and social issues of a particular group. One explanation of the low attendance between minority groups is that each group may feel that they are aware and understand the issues of the other. Unfortunately, there is no data regarding the number of non-minority students who attend minority sponsored programs.

Further research is indicated in the area of minority student perception of the University and its environment. Although positive results were observed, a more detailed analysis (e.g. Corzzini Wilson, Hirebner, 1977) might well inform the University of what other areas could be enhanced to promote greater satisfaction among minority students.

Several previous studies indicate a high felt need among minority students on a majority campus to have minority program offices geared specifically to meet their needs. The results of this study do not totally support this claim. The findings do indicate that minority students perceive the need for assistance, however, that they may seek assistance where they feel a genuine interest and understanding which may include non-minority services. It also implies that the minority student has a broad understanding of the various operations of general student service areas.

An understanding between minority student organizations and retention remains incomplete. Of those students, however, who were active in one of the five groups their feelings of comfort were aided by their association with one of the five groups. This question was not asked of respondents who indicated involvement in general student groups. A closer examination of the involvement factor is indicated. For example to what extent does involvement in campus life impact on retention and academic performance?

It is interesting to note that most students (81%) were active in a high school, church or community group before coming to the University. Since a majority of the sample group came from integrated high schools and were active in a high school group, one could conclude that the degree of broad participation in groups at the University is not new and may explain later involvement patterns.

A general conclusion that can be reached based on the results of this study is that students in this sample perceive the opportunities for involvement and assistance in a broad way. These findings should not, however, be exaggerated. Further research is indicated to determine or investigate: 1) the effects of minority student involvement on feelings of alienation, retention and academic performance; 2) identification of the positive factors that influence minority student perception of their environment and what effects this has on retention. Additionally, participation in extra-curricular activities in high schools particularly in a leadership role is reported to be a positive indication of college retention. Thus, if a student is active in high school and remains so in college, what effects if any does this have on retention?

Although this study was exploratory in nature and intended to provide descriptive data, its findings may well serve as a basis for the development and identification of several hypotheses which suggest a positive relationship between retention and minority student organizations at UW-Madison. There are enough variations between the groups related to the role of minority student organizations that suggest that the four categories of minority students and their needs should be examined separately. Further study is particularly indicated in the area of identification of the characteristics of those students who are actively involved in student organizations, their perception of the University environment, and cumulative grade point averages. Perhaps then a relationship may be established with respect to the involvement of minority students in student organizations and retention.

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